



Raising The Bar

Brent Hammond

By Rick Weinberg

It's 8:15 a.m. and the sun has just burst through the glorious sky on this picturesque California morning.

Brent Hammond, all 6 foot 5 of him, walks into a home in the gorgeous seaside town of Belmont Shore in Orange County. He inspects every detail – every *little* detail ... including the brass hinges on a stylish new six-panel closet door.

“This is good,” he says. “Really good.”

He pauses. Then he smiles.

“*Now*, we're ready to sell.”

Hammond is selling this spectacular California property – and he wants to get his clients top dollar. They expect nothing less. He expects nothing less.

But several weeks earlier, when Hammond walked into the home, he didn't like

If you are looking for a realtor to stick a sign on your front lawn, multi-million dollar California realtor Brent Hammond is not your guy.

what he saw. Neither did his interior designer, Heather Eaves.

Dirty rugs. Flat old doors. Faded paint. Distasteful art work. Landscape issues.

Some agents simply give a new owner or prospective buyer “a credit” to buy a new

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rug or doors or a paint job. Not Hammond. He wants it replaced and upgraded – immediately.

“People buy on emotion,” says Hammond, a leading real estate professional in California for nearly a quarter-century.

“When everything is perfect in a home, or as perfect as it can be, the home showcases well and sellers are able to get top dollar.

“A dirty carpet, for instance, turns people off immediately,” he adds. “Same with paint or the way furniture is arranged. Or pictures. It may feel OK to the seller -- but not to the buyer. It might make them feel uncomfortable and that ‘wow’ factor that you hope to get is quickly gone.

“If someone has a carpet that needs to be replaced you can either offer the new buyer money or put a new carpet in,” he says. “Since we know people buy emotionally, you want to put in something new and fresh. For the amount money you’re going to spend, it’s a no brainer.

“My goal is to help them get the most money for their home and get the widest audience excited about their property.”

Hammond, a multi-million dollar producer who covers the entire coastline from south Orange County to Santa Monica, takes 1% of his commission



and puts it back into the house – that’s \$10,000 for a typical \$1 million California home.

The upside is huge.

Recently, Hammond was selling a home in Long Beach, California. When he walked into the house, well, he went right into his routine – inspect every little thing, including the tiny see-through hole in the front door.

The sellers wanted \$820,000 for the home. Hammond spent \$8,800 on upgrades. Guess what the house sold for -- \$890,000.

“I’ve never seen anyone who is so meticulous ... someone who is so much of a perfectionist,” says Heather Eaves, an interior designer who has worked with Hammond for several years.

“Now that’s not a bad thing at all,” she says with a smile. “That’s a good thing. I wish more people were like Brent. He’s amazing. He’s does an amazing job for his clients.”

Always has.

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That's Hammond's promise to himself and his clients.

"No one cares more than Brent," says Ray Sidney, who has worked with Hammond numerous times – as a buyer and a seller. "I've worked with a few real estate people before and no one comes close to the service and care that Brent provides.

"I was amazed at how he kept in touch with me. He'd call me several times a time to let me know what was happening every step of the way. He does what's best for his client, not himself. He thinks of himself way after he thinks about the client. He does things the right way."

For Hammond, it all comes naturally and easily. That's his nature. That's his makeup. He's all about honesty, integrity and doing the right thing.

Just how did Hammond decide to work within this business model? Easy. For him, it was a no-brainer.

"When I got into this business 10 years ago and saw how homes would sell so much faster if they were nicer and cleaner, it was an easy call," he says. "Nicer, cleaner houses had a 'wow' factor when potential buyers walked in. Those houses got more offers and they got above-asking price.

"I knew by using this business philosophy that I would have much more work up front, but it would be the best thing to do in the end for the seller, for the buyer and for my company. It was a win-win for everyone."

"Frankly, I don't know of anyone who goes to the extent Brent does," Eaves says. "His business model is definitely unique in this day and age."

When some of Hammond's friends, colleagues and associates heard about what he was doing, some cheered and some did not. They felt that if he was doing it, they had to do it too – that Hammond was setting the bar too high.

So be it.

Hammond was clear on how he wanted to conduct his business: The Right Way.

"What we do for clients is we take care of them from point A to point B to point C to point Z through the entire selling and buying process," he says.

Hammond is this kind of professional:

"If you're looking for someone to put a sign in front of your house, I'm not your guy. If you're looking for someone who will help you get the most money from your home, that's me, who'll put in the time, I'm your guy. It may take three or four extra weeks to get your home prepared to sell but you'll make 10's of thousands of more dollars doing that."

He has the proof.

Hammond is in the business of helping people. It's what he has done his whole life.

Born in Long Beach, California, Hammond came from a very difficult background. His mother divorced twice and had to move her children more than 10 times during Brent's childhood.

"We went where we needed to go to get by," he says.

He was a "latch-key kid" – he'd come and go from school and other activities as he pleased since his mother was hard at work, trying to provide for Brent, his older

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brother and younger sister. Sure, he got into trouble a few times, but he turned out to be, in the words of his sister Ariana, “a wonderful human being with a heart of gold.”

That heart of gold developed early on. That’s when Hammond realized he had a gift for giving, a gift for helping people. While working at a national hardware chain at the age of 17, Hammond was embraced by many of the regular customers. Some had him come to their homes to help them out with laborious projects.

One customer liked Hammond so much that he asked if he would consider helping him take care of his elderly and ill father. Hammond agreed.

When Hammond arrived at the home the very first day, without any experience whatsoever in this area, he was stunned while observing a nurse working with the elderly gentleman.

Hammond wasn’t sure he was cut out for it.

“But I made a commitment and I wanted to follow through,” he says. “I’m like that.”

He quickly realized how much he liked the work, how he enjoyed helping people and making them feel good about life and themselves. The elderly man gradually got better and moved back to his home. Guess whom he asked to come along to help him at his home?

Brent Hammond.

“I don’t know what it is but I’m glad I have the mindset of wanting to help people,” he says. “I was talking to a friend of mine the other day who had gone through some medical issues. We were talking about how hard it is to find a good doctor. The whole profession has changed from serving people to just making money.

“And I see a lot of that in the real estate industry too,” Hammond says, “and I don’t ever want to be a part of that. I want to stay connected with people. That’s what it’s about – helping people. It’s not always about making money.”

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